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SUBJECT: ECUADOR PREPARING TO MOVE FORWARD ON CIVIL AVIATION LEGISLATION

REF: GUAYAQUIL 1303

¶11. Summary. Ecuador's Congress is preparing for the second debate on proposed civil aviation legislation sometime in January. A legal advisor to the committee in which the draft legislation is pending says a vote on the floor of the Congress is likely sometime in February. The passage of this legislation would represent a necessary step towards Category I status under the International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program. The Embassy is pushing for passage of this legislation and is working with the Ecuadorian Civil Aviation Authority (DGAC) and U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials to ensure that the final legislation will meet security standards. Many special interests groups are already lobbying on behalf of the legislation and urging Congress to move as quickly as possible. Despite past delays, we believe prospects for Congressional passage are good. End Summary.

Civil Aviation Legislation - Long Time Coming

¶12. Civil aviation legislation meeting international security standards has languished in Congress since early 2003. Several reviews and revisions have taken place since then. In April 2003, the FAA reviewed the draft legislation and provided feedback to the DGAC about necessary revisions to meet FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA). In the ensuing year and a half, FAA officials have met with DGAC officials to provide additional guidance. The FAA agreed to give the legislation a final review in December ¶2004.

Let's Pull Together

¶13. The Embassy has been working closely with the FAA and DGAC to ensure that Ecuador's legislation meets international standards. In addition to the Embassy, many special interest groups are lobbying for passage of this legislation. The Congressional committee overseeing this legislation has already received numerous inquiries from the DGAC, airline associations, pilots associations, and other groups.

¶14. The Ambassador stopped over in Guayaquil en route to the Galapagos and met with Nicholas Romero, Director of Guayaquil's Airport, to discuss the legislation (Reftel). She told Romero and Guayaquil Consulate officials that active participation from stakeholders in Guayaquil would be necessary for passage of the legislation. She urged them to work together to present a united front in favor of passage.

Comment

¶15. We are cautiously optimistic that the Congress will pass civil legislation early next year. Our key concern has been making certain that the legislation passed actually meets standards.

KENNEY